

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 04365 121711Z  
ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 4365

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT SY  
SUBJ: DISCUSSION WITH KHADDAM RE NATURE OF PEACE

### 1. SUMMARY:

IN JULY 11 DISCUSSION, KHADDAM WAS A BIT LESS NEGATIVE  
IN HIS REACTION TO URGING THAT SYRIA FOCUS ON ISSUE OF NATURE  
OF PEACE THAN ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS. HE STILL CONSIDERS  
THAT ISRAELI ACTIONS OFFER NO ENCOURAGEMENT TO ARAB CAPITALS  
TO BE FORTHCOMING ON THIS QUESTION. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING MY JULY 11 MEETING WITH FONMIN KHADDAM, LATTER  
READ ME STATEMENT BY ISRAELI MINISTER OF CONSTRUCTION AND  
PUBLIC WORKS (APPARENTLY ISSUED THE DAY PREVIOUS) TO EFFECT  
THAT ISRAEL INTENDS CONSTRUCT 10 NEW SETTLEMENTS ON THE GOLEN  
HEIGHTS AND ALSO TO ESTABLISH A MAJOR NEW ADMINISTRATIVE  
CENTER THERE. SUCH STATEMENTS AND POLICIES WORK COUNTER TO  
EFFORTS FOR PEACE, KHADDAM COMPLAINED, AND ILLUSTRATE WHY  
SYRIA IS SO FIRMLY CONVINCED ISRAELIS INTEND TO BLOCK ALL  
MOVES TOWARDS PEACE. "WE HOPE U.S. WILL PRESSURE ISRAEL TO  
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BRING AN END TO SUCH POLICIES." HE THEN ASKED MY REACTION  
TO THE STATEMENT. REPLIED THAT IF FONMIN'S VERSION OF STATE-  
MENT WERE ACCURATE, I FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE ONE MORE  
STUPID FOR THE ISRAELIS TO HAVE MADE, GIVEN THE  
PREDICTABLE REACTIONS BOTH IN DAMASCUS AND WASHINGTON, ON  
THE EVE OF BEGIN'S VISIT AND THE SECRETARY'S RETURN TO THE  
MIDDLE EAST.

3. THEN SAID I WISHED SHARE WITH KHADDAM IMPRESSIONS I HAD GAINED FROM MY BRIEF VISIT TO WASHINGTON TWO WEEKS AGO WHEN I HAD HAD OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW AREA SITUATION WITH SOME WHITE HOUSE AIDES AS WELL AS WITH STATEDEPARTMENT OFFICIALS FOLLOWING ME DEVELOPMENTS. NOTED THAT I KNEW KHADDAM HAD STUDIED PRESIDENT CARTER'S ME STATEMENTS CAREFULLY DURING THE PAST MONTHS AND THAT HE WAS BEING BRIEFED STEADILY ON THOSE MADE BY OTHER ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS. MANY ELEMENTS OF OUR POSITION WERE APPARENTLY PLEASING TO SYRIA BUT DAMASCUS WAS CLEARLY HAVING DIFFICULTY COMING TO GRIPS WITH OUR FOCUS ON THE "NATURE OF PEACE." REMARKED THAT NEITHER HE NOR PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD HAD BEEN READY TO ADDRESS SUBSTANCE OF THIS ISSUE WHEN RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS BY CODEL HAMILTON DURING THAT DELEGATION'S JULY 10-11 VISIT TO DAMASCUS. KHADDAM SHOULD KNOW THAT ON THEIR DEPARTURE THE CONGRESSMEN HAD TOLD ME THEY HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE EVIDENT SINCERITY OF SYRIA'S INTEREST IN PEACE. AT SAME TIME THEY HAD LEFT UNCERTAIN HOW THE PEACE PROCESS COULD ADVANCE BECAUSE THEY HEARD NO SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW PEACE MIGHT BE IMPLEMENTED ONCE THE STATE OF BELLIGERENCY ENDS. THE CONGRESSMEN'S CONCERN ON THIS POINT ECHOED COMMENTS I HAD HEARD GENERALLY IN WASHINGTON.

4. NOTED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAS REINFORCED HIS REPUTATION AS A PRINCIPLED AND STUBBORN LEADER, ONE WHO WILL PRESERVE  
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IN SEEKING ACHIEVE SOLUTIONS AGAINST HEAVY ODDS. NONETHELESS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE PRESIDENT'S OWN PARTY IS IN OVERWHELMING CONTROL OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH, CARTER MUST BE ABLE TO PERSUADE THE CONGRESS--AS WELL AS U.S. PUBLIC OPINION--THAT IN DEALING WITH THE ME HE HAS A VIABLE SOLUTION TO PROPOSE THIS EXTREMELY TOUGH FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEM, WHICH EXCITES SO MUCH DOMESTIC INTEREST. THE PRESIDENT IS NEITHER MAGICIAN NOR PROPHET. HE WILL NEED PERSUASIVE CARDS IN HIS HANDS AS HE TALKS WITH THE LEADERS OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY, AS WELL AS THE ISRAELIS ABOUT THE PEACE PROCESS. SOME OF THESE CARDS CAN ONLY BE SUPPLIED BY THE ARABS.

5. STRESSED THAT IN URGING KHADDAM TO GIVE MORE THOUGHT TO WHAT SYRIA AND THE OTHER ARABS MIGHT AGREE COULD BE THE CONTENT AND NATURE OF A FUTURE PEACE, I WAS NOT PUSHING FOR AN IMMEDIATE ANSWER. I DID NOT KNOW WHAT SECRETARY VANCE WOULD BE BRINGING TO DAMASCUS FOLLOWING BEGIN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON. BUT SYRIA SHOULD BE THINKING ABOUT SOME SPECIFICS DURING THE COMING WEEKS ABOUT WHAT IT MIGHT AGREE TO DO AFTER ENDING THE STATE OF BELLIGERENCY. IT WILL NOT BE ENOUGH JUST TO TELL TO CARTER, VANCE AND THOSE FEW

AMERICAN CONGRESSIONAL VISITORS WHO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET AL-ASSAD FACE-TO-FACE OF SYRIA'S REAL INTEREST IN PEACE.

6. KHADDAM REPLIED, AS HE OFTEN DOES, BY POSING HIS OWN QUESTION. "HOW CAN YOU EVEN SUGGEST THAT WE THINK ALONG THESE LINES GIVEN BEGIN'S STATEMENTS? OUR PUBLIC WILL NOT STAND FOR OUR MAKING ANY MORE STATEMENTS ABOUT SYRIA'S INTEREST IN PEACE, MUCH LESS TALKING ABOUT WHAT WOULD DEVELOP AFTER THE END OF BELLIGERENCY, WHILE BEGIN IS SO CLEARLY HOSTILE TO THIS COUNTRY AND TAKING CONCRETE STEPS TO BLOCK THE WHOLE PEACE PROCESS." I REMINDED HIM WE WERE ENCOURAGING ISRAELIS ALONG OTHER LINES. I REFERRED KHADDAM TO THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT OF JUNE 27. SAID HE SHOULD REALIZE THIS STATEMENT HAD BEEN PROMPTED BY EARLIER  
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STATEMENTS OF BEGIN'S AND DAYAN'S CONCERNING THE STATUS OF THE WEST BANK. WE HAD DETERMINED WE COULD AFFORD NO MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT U.S.CONVICTION THAT ALL ISSUES REMAINED OPEN FOR NEGOTIATION. THAT STATEMENT HAD HAD WHITE HOUSE APPROVAL AND MADE ITS POINT ABOUT NEED FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK WITH GREAT CLARITY. (KHADDAM AGREED WITH LATTER OBSERVATION.)

7. CONCLUDED THAT I HOPED HE WOULD GIVE FURTHER THOUGHT TO IDEAS WHICH SYRIA MIGHT SHARE QUIETLY WITH VANCE AND CARTER IN THE NEAR FUTURE. CODEL HAMILTON'S LINE OF QUESTIONING HAD BEEN DEVELOPED INDEPENDENTLY OF THE WHITE HOUSE AND STATE DEPARTMENT. IT WAS INDICATIVE OF THE CONVICTION ON THE PART OF THOUGHTFUL AMERICANS FOLLOWING MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS THAT THE ARABS MUST BE MORE FORTHCOMING IN DISCUSSING WHAT THE CONTENT OF PEACE MAY CONSIST OF IF AND WHEN THE STATE OF BELLIGERENCY ENDS. KHADDAM CONFINED HIMSELF TO SAYING THAT SYRIA WOULD WAIT TO SEE WHAT SECRETARY VANCE BRINGS WITH HIM TO THE AREA AFTER THE BEGIN VISIT.

8. COMMENT:

KHADDAM'S REACTION TO THIS PRESENTATION WAS NOT AS INSTANTLY NEGATIVE AS HE AND AL-ASSAD HAVE BEEN WHEN PAST DISCUSSIONS HAVE TURNED TO THE NATURE OF PEACE. HE STILL REFLECTS, HOWEVER, A DEEP SKEPTICISM THAT WASHINGTON WILL BE ABLE TO AFFECT THE THRUST OF ISRAELI ACTIONS AND PLANNING SUFFICIENTLY TO ENCOURAGE THE ARAB CAPITALS, OR PERHAPS I SHOULD RESTRICT THIS COMMENT TO DAMASCUS, TO FORMULATE THEIR OWN IDEAS ABOUT THE NATURE OF PEACE.  
MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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